



**Rhode Island Department of Human Services**

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November 18, 2021

Honorable Patricia A. Serpa, Chairwoman  
House Committee on Oversight  
101 State House  
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chairwoman Serpa:

Please accept the attached report as the State's most recent update on the RIBridges system, which covers the reporting period October 16, 2021 – November 15, 2021. This document provides monthly updates on the following topics:

- System performance and improvement
- RI Department of Human Services (DHS) Employee Training
- Pending Applications
- SNAP Timeliness and Lobby/DHS Call Center Summaries
- CCAP Off-Cycle Payments
- LTSS Interim Payments
- Correspondence with Federal Partners (if any)

We appreciate your continued advocacy on behalf of those we serve, your interest in the health of the RIBridges system and the progress made to address outstanding issues. As always, please contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Celia J. Blue". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Celia J. Blue, Interim Director



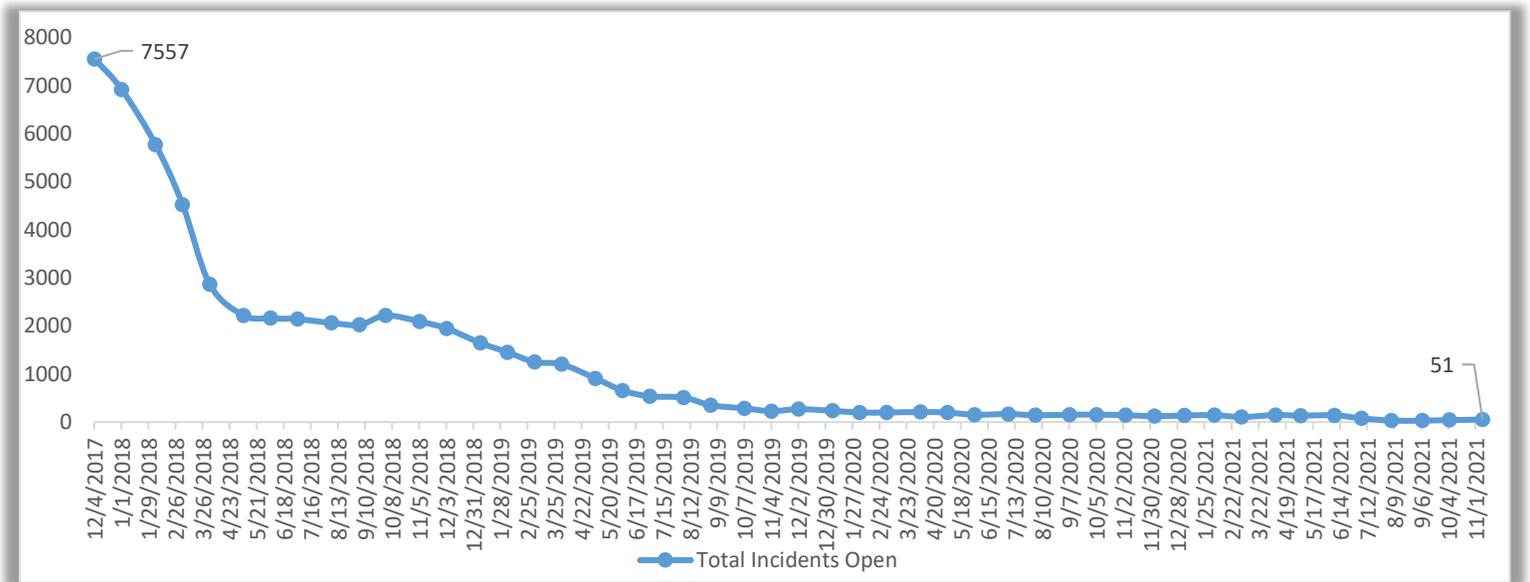
# RI Bridges: Monthly Update

## November 2021

Our team takes its charge seriously in promoting health, nurturing quality of life and being there for Rhode Islanders when needed. Our oversight of the work on the RI Bridges system is an important part of the equation. With system stabilization under our belt, we continue to focus on ensuring full compliance of the system. This report provides an update on our efforts and progress to date.

### SYSTEM PERFORMANCE + IMPROVEMENT

Due to a focused effort on consistent and stable system operations, the number of new and existing incidents (when the system does not operate as expected for a DHS customer, worker or provider) has **decreased by 99 percent** since December 2017. As of November 8, 2021, there were **51** open incidents.



### DHS STAFFING

DHS continues to make progress in hiring candidates for critical positions identified. Since October, DHS hired five employees. They are:

- 1 Programming Services Officer in the Child Care Office
- 2 Human Services Policy and System Specialist in the Licensing Office
- 1 Supervising Eligibility Technician
- 1 Eligibility Technician I

## DHS TRAINING

### Training Overview

Training Topic	Training Date	# of Training Hours	# of New Staff	# of Current Staff
Multicultural Competency Training: Modules One, Two, Three and Four (Seven one-and-half hour sessions)	10-14-21 10-19-21 10-21-21 10-26-21 10-28-21 10-29-21	10.5	0	115
New Hire Orientation (One full day sessions)	10-14-21	4.5	2	0
STAR Supervisor Training (One two-hour sessions)	10-14-21	2	0	6
Customer Relations Training Series (One two-hour sessions)	10-21-21	2	0	21
Rhode Island Learning Center Trainings (These trainings are self-directed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DHS FTI, HIPAA, and Confidentiality 676 staff enrolled</li> <li>Telephonic Signature 31 staff enrolled</li> <li>Telephonic Signature - Elderly and Disabled Adults (EAD) 41 staff enrolled</li> <li>Asset Verification System (AVS) 102 staff enrolled</li> <li>Customer Portal (424)</li> <li>SNAP Reinvestment Updates (429 enrolled)</li> <li>Visit Record (426 enrolled)</li> </ul>		0	Combined total of <b>1,194*</b> staff trained on LMS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>465 Completed FTI</li> <li>74 Completed AVS</li> <li>18 Completed Telephonic Signature</li> <li>19 Telephonic Signature EAD</li> <li>274 Completed Customer Portal</li> <li>168 Completed SNAP Reinvestment Training</li> <li>176 Completed Visit Record Training</li> </ul>
<b>Totals</b>		<b>19</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1,336*</b>

\* current number of staff trained is a duplicate number

## Workshop Descriptions

**STAR Supervisor Training:** This training was designed by supervisor for supervisors. The goals of the trainings are as follows:

- Instill the DHS Guiding Principles in everyday work
- Support supervisors by enhancing leadership, coaching and mentoring skills
- Build professional capacity through the DHS workforce
- Create tools that encourage and support a culture of continuous improvement
- Understand what constitutes good supervision
- Incorporate the DHS guiding principles in everyday work and decision making
- Resetting from past experiences and looking to the future of DHS
- Identifying behavioral styles

**Multicultural Competency Training:** The Multicultural Competence Modules offer contextualized, scaffolded anti-oppression educational workshops for DHS employees. There are four foundational modules that introduce participants to frameworks, concepts, and strategies so DHS personnel are better equipped to advance its diversity, equity, and inclusion strategic goals individually and collectively. The workshops are offered virtually. Each session meets for 1.5-2 hours. The format for the sessions includes facilitated dialogue with individual and group activities.

### **Module One:** Advancing Anti-Oppression in the Workplace

This session presents and discusses the multicultural competencies that are necessary to advance anti-oppression in the workplace (e.g., awareness, understanding, knowledge, interaction, and sensitivity). The objectives for this session include:

- Discussing select demographics of DHS' workforce data and implications for practice
- Exploring foundational concepts associated with anti-oppression and multi-cultural competence
- Outline Washington State University Office of Outreach and Education's Cultural Competence Model
- Brainstorm the hallmarks of anti-oppressive, multiculturally competent DHS workforce and workplace

### **Module Two:** Understanding Social Identity, Power and Privilege

The purpose of this session is to introduce the concept of social identity, power, and privilege. Special emphasis will be placed on social identity, power, and privilege in human services settings. The objectives of this session include:

- Defining the concept of social identity
- Exploring the major forms of social identity in the United States
- Describing the three processes of social identity
- Describing the systems of power, privilege and oppression
- Identifying one's position on the social identity scale and discussing implications for practice.

### **Module Three:** Disrupting Implicit Bias with Inclusive Behaviors in the Workplace

The purpose of this session is to introduce the concept of implicit bias. Special emphasis will be placed on implicit bias in human service settings. The objectives of this session include:

- Discussing the roots of bias
- Differentiating between explicit and implicit bias
- Presenting the common forms of implicit bias
- Identifying strategies to disrupt implicit bias using the multicultural change intervention matrix.

### **Module Four:** Combating Microaggressions with Inclusive Language in the Workplace

Traditional notions of oppression hold that it is rare, occurring by a handful of rogue agents who intend to inflict harm on targets. However, it also occurs by well-meaning agents who convey unintentional, but no less harmful, “hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults.” The effects of these indignities, coined microaggressions, are cumulative. The purpose of this interactive module will be to present and discuss the contours of microaggressions, offering examples of inclusive language to combat microaggressions as a target or a bystander. The objectives of this session include:

- Describing origins of the term microaggressions (i.e., identity-based abuse)
- Differentiating between agents and targets of microaggressions
- Identifying the manifestations of microaggressions (e.g., intent vs impact)
- Delineating the three types of microaggressions
- Describing the consequences on targets
- Delineating select microaggression themes
- Outlining strategies for responding to microaggressions as a target or bystander

**New Hire Orientation:** The goal of the session is to provide new employees with all the pertinent information they need to begin working at DHS and to familiarize them with organizational policies and procedures. In addition, the orientation introduces employees to the RIBridges system. Participants will:

- Understand organizational hierarchy
- Learn DHS’ mission and vision
- Gain an understanding of DHS’ programs and services
- Review and learn policies and procedures regarding payroll, dress code and other practices
- Learn about the LEAN initiative
- Obtain mandated training for Federal Tax Information (FTI), Civil Rights, Voter Registration and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)
- Receive hands on basic navigation and data collection training in RI Bridges

**Customer Relations Training:** This training provides information for DHS staff members on strategies to build their customer service skills.

- **Session One: Understanding Your Customer:** Every customer brings unique and standard expectations. In this session, the participants will begin to understand what internal and external customers expect. They will explore how change affects their customers and begin to explore the role empathy plays in every interaction.
- **Session Two: Communicating Effectively with Your Customer:** This session focuses on what it takes to communicate effectively with the customers. Throughout the course, this session primarily focuses on serving customers by phone. Participants will also learn about adult learning styles, perceptions and what happens to communication during stress.
- **Session Three:** This unit pulls together all the key elements of the previous two sessions to understand what customers want and what they don’t want and how to deliver them effectively, especially over the phone. The participants will explore what it takes to demonstrate empathy, be responsive, and communicate clearly with their customers. Finally, we brainstorm what it takes to go beyond the customer expectation, creating an enthusiastically satisfied experience.

**Rhode Island Learning Center Trainings:** These trainings are self-directed. Staff are enrolled through the Learning Management System.

- **FTI/HIPAA:** This is a required training for all DHS employees. This refresher training covered the federal regulations and internal procedures that staff need to follow in protecting customer information.

- **Telephonic Signature/Telephonic Signature – EAD:** To work new documents such as applications, recerts, interims (with a change) and employment plans over the phone, it is imperative that either a signed document is present in the case file OR the worker records a telephonic signature while the customer is on the phone.
- **Asset Verification Training System:** This training provides guidance to staff processing EAD and LTSS requests for Medicaid determinations at the time of application and renewals.
- **SNAP Reinvestment:** This course is designed as a refresher for Operations Staff on SNAP six-month interim processing. The intent of this course is to review best practices for interim processing.
- **Customer Portal:** A walk-through of the front and back ends of the Customer Portal.
- **Visit Record Refresher:** This course will provide an overview of the Visit Record functionality in RIBridges. The purpose of the training is to increase knowledge on the Visit Record function in RIBridges that will be included in all field offices and enhancing consistency in our processes by appreciating the customer journey.

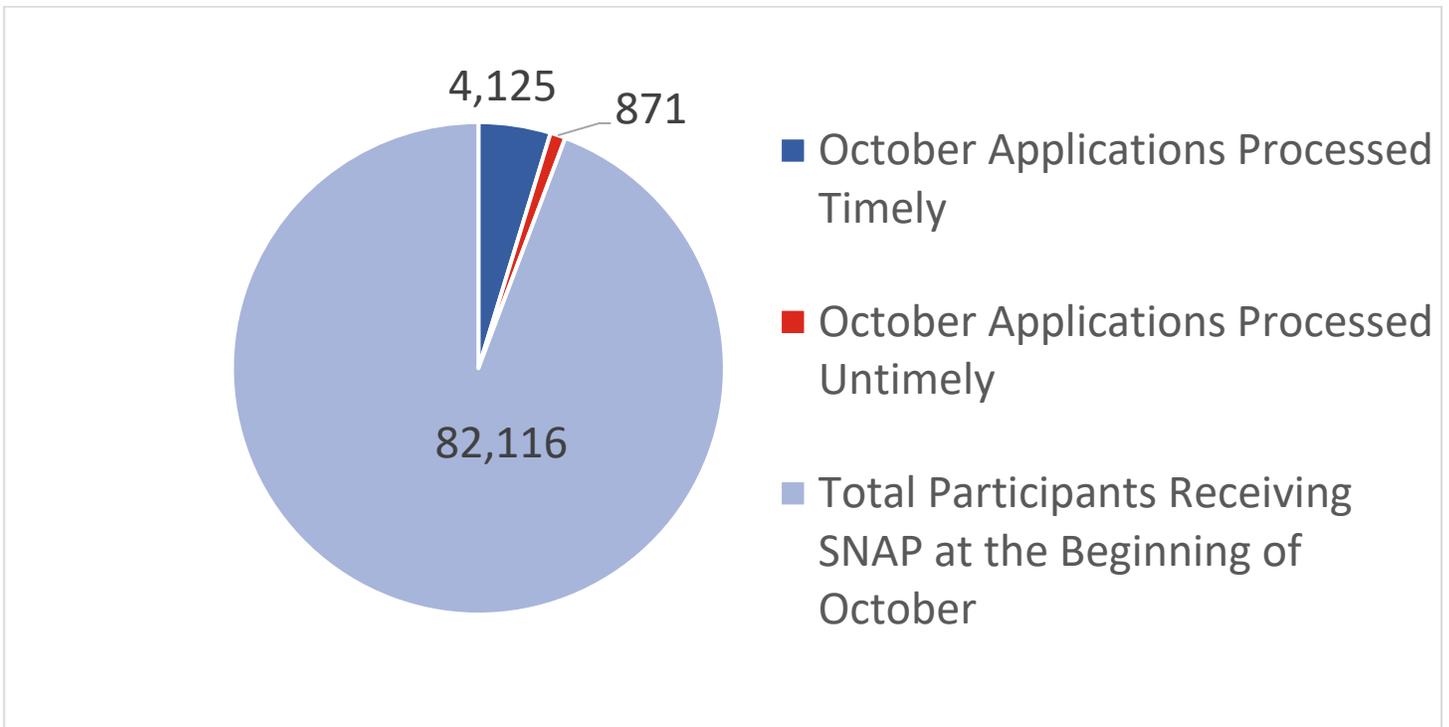
## PENDING NEW APPLICATIONS

The State continues to prioritize access to benefits. As of **November 11, 2021**, the number of pending new applications across all programs was **4,453**. The total of overdue, pending applications awaiting State action was **1,753**.

	Not Overdue			Overdue			Total
	Client	State	Total	Client	State	Total	
<b>SNAP Expedited</b>	40	37	77	8	23	31	<b>108</b>
<b>SNAP Non-Expedited</b>	580	501	1,081	68	64	132	<b>1,213</b>
<b>CCAP</b>	28	223	251	9	26	35	<b>286</b>
<b>GPA Burial</b>	0	6	6	0	1	1	<b>7</b>
<b>SSP</b>	0	17	17	0	3	3	<b>20</b>
<b>GPA</b>	8	37	45	6	14	20	<b>65</b>
<b>RIW</b>	143	124	267	16	39	55	<b>322</b>
<b>Undetermined Medical</b>	26	194	220	60	1,071	1,131	<b>1,351</b>
<b>Medicaid-MAGI</b>	48	30	78	60	57	117	<b>195</b>
<b>MPP</b>	12	85	97	9	348	357	<b>454</b>
<b>Complex Medicaid</b>	9	40	49	16	66	82	<b>131</b>
<b>LTSS</b>	11	248	259	1	41	42	<b>301</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>905</b>	<b>1,542</b>	<b>2,447</b>	<b>253</b>	<b>1,753</b>	<b>2,006</b>	<b>4,453</b>

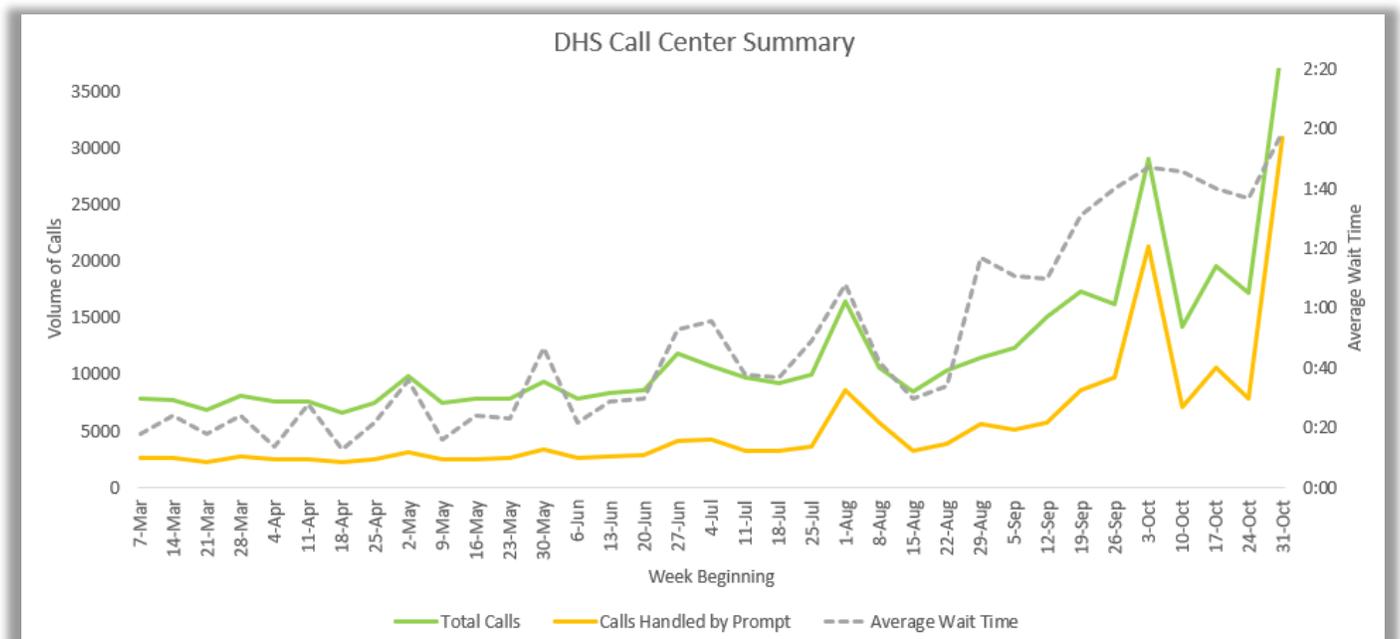
## SNAP TIMELINESS

In October 2021, SNAP benefits were issued timely to **82,116** households. Despite the impact of COVID-19, **83** percent of new SNAP applications were timely processed. The number of applications not timely processed represents less than **1** percent of the SNAP population receiving benefits.



## CALL CENTER

For the five-week period of **October 3, 2021 through the week that started on October 31, 2021**, the average wait time to DHS staff was about **1 hour and 46 minutes**. DHS recognizes this average wait time is an issue, and with understanding the pressure points that are impacting this longer wait, we have implemented operational changes and we are in the process of increasing Call Center staff to address this issue. The busiest week was the week beginning October 31st, and there were **39,475** calls then.



## CCAP OFF-CYCLE PAYMENTS

Below are the total number of batch payments made to child care providers between July 16, 2021 through August 15, 2021.

Batch	Date Issued	# of Providers	Amount after Union/PAC removed
9	10/7/2021	510	\$2,063,911.76
9A	10/8/2021	26	\$63,733.67
9B	10/15/2021	23	\$47,620.86
10	10/21/2021	503	\$2,065,811.42
10A	10/22/2021	16	\$58,209.98
10B	10/29/2021	34	\$161,021.73

	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (9, 9A, &9B)	559	\$2,175,266.29
Off-cycle (9A & 9B)	49	\$111,354.53
Provider off-cycle/total	9.61%	-
Payments off-cycle/total	5.40%	-
	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (10, 10A & 10B)	553	\$2,285,043.13
Off-cycle (6A & 6B)	50	\$219,231.71
Provider off-cycle/total	9.94%	-
Payments off-cycle/total	10.61%	-

## LTSS INTERIM PAYMENTS

We continue to make progress in reducing the LTSS backlog of applications. As of this submission, there are **41** overdue LTSS applications pending State action.

Through the contingency process, which ensures nursing and assisted living facilities receive prompt reimbursement from the State, Rhode Island has paid out approximately **\$150,000** in interim payments to facilities for the State Fiscal Year 2022. The fiscal year for 2022 began on July 1, 2021.

Our payment reconciliation process remains ongoing as we continue to meet with long term care facilities across the state. In total, the State has paid approximately **\$152.6 million** and we have collected about **\$132 million** in reconciliation payments so far from nursing home facilities. This represents approximately **86.5 percent** of the total amount of contingency payments made.

## UPDATE ON RECERTIFICATIONS PROCESS

The State has verified that Medicaid renewals were appropriately initiated by the RIBridges System in compliance with the CMS approved renewal plan.

## CORRESPONDENCE WITH FEDERAL PARTNERS

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) are important partners to the State. We continue to communicate regularly to review progress with the RIBridges system. There wasn't any communication during this reporting period.